

**Africa International Journal of Management Education and Governance
(AIJMEG) 1(3)**

© Oasis International Consulting Journals, 2016 (ISSN: 2518-0827)

Role of New Media in Responsible Journalism in Kenya: A Case Study of Kenyan Bloggers.

Vincent Mukangayi Achando- Kisii University

Received in 23rd August 2016

Received in Revised form on 14th Sept 2016

Accepted on 20th Sept 2016

Abstract

The advent of new media has completely revolutionised journalism in the world and particularly in Kenya, with regard to sourcing dissemination and consumption of information is concerned. This is pegged on the advancement in technology through the internet that enables journalist and bloggers to publish, share news and events as well as receive feedback from the public. This scenario has changed the media landscape in Kenya in the recent years. The emergence of citizen media has been enabled by technologies such as mobile phones, blogs, micro-bloggers and video sharing platforms. Blogs have become authoritative channel through which people share ideas, news, advice and analyses on different happenings in the society. The practice has recently turned out to be journalistic, with a good number of bloggers running authoritative and influential blogs, where thousands of people flock for information. Kenya has the highest number of active bloggers in Africa and in the world. This study aims to establish roles of bloggers in responsible journalism in Kenya. The study was guided by the following questions: (i) Are bloggers journalists? (ii) What roles do bloggers play in journalism? (iii) Are bloggers aware of journalistic ethics? (iv) What roles do bloggers play in responsible journalism? The paper used descriptive survey design. Data was collected through in-depth individual interviews and focused group discussion interviews with selected mainstream journalist and bloggers, as well as a review of existing body of knowledge. The paper sampled 30 journalists from two national media houses in Kenya, namely Standard Group and media max group. 30 bloggers were also using snow ball sampling techniques. The findings reveal that few journalists were bloggers while many bloggers who were amateurs. Further, results show that amateur journalists who were bloggers did not know the journalistic code of ethics mostly because they lacked journalistic training. The findings were used to make recommendations to the government to regulate bloggers, to the bloggers they need journalistic training and need to form a regulating body, and to the field of academics to come up with proper programmes for training bloggers.

Key Words: bloggers, business, citizen media, journalistic ethics, responsible journalism,

Introduction

In the recent years, new media has gained popularity worldwide. Many people use social media such as Face book, Twitter, Flickr, You Tube, instagram, whatsApp, and online sites - yahoo, Google and blogs both for social and professional purposes. Although not everyone has gotten on board with the new media giant, it has shaped how people around the world communicate with one another. Information that was once considered off limits and inaccessible by an "average" person is now disseminated within shortest period possible. Because blogs are easily accessible to millions of people globally, they are effective platform to disseminate headline news to mass audience/viewers (Baecker, 2011).

Blogs or bloggers in Kenya is a recent phenomena dating to about five years ago. The

public wholly depended on journalists in the mainstream media and the internet for information. The sprouting of blogs and bloggers has tremendously changed the Kenyan media landscape. Blogs can be divided into categories depending on the information they relay to their consumers. According to the state of Blogging & Social Media in Kenya 2015 report by Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) there is an estimated 15,000 registered blogs in Kenya with. Active being 3,000 registered blogs by Kenyans on the Word press, Blogger and Tumblr platforms. These include; family, creative writing, entertainment, politics, relationships, general blogs among others.

Kenyans frequent the sites regularly in search of information and therefore blogs are here to stay. Blogs have replaced the space newspapers, TV

and radio occupied as sources of information, particularly on the internet. Google Internet Zeitgeist report (2013) on Kenyans online searches points to this fact. In 2013, the Google report showed that Daily Nation (mainstream media) topped the list of most-searched news websites in Kenya followed closely by Daily Post and Goal.com, which are blogs that offer general and sports news, respectively. The blogs beat several mainstream media outlets that include the Standard, People Daily and the Star, as most-searched news sites. The leading sites, according to Google, were picked after a compilation of trending searches, which have the highest amount of web traffic over a certain period.

This is an indication that while mainstream media may dominate dissemination of news outside the internet, blogs have become popular forms of online communication as the number of people who read news via the internet increases. Communication Authority of Kenya (2014) puts the number of Kenyans who have access to the internet as at March 2014 at 21.6 million. The ease of acceptance and warm reception of blogs and bloggers by audiences and public is a pointer that the sites have added dynamism to news gathering, reporting, and freedom of expression and have expanded the practice of citizen journalism, which initially was limited to use of mobile phones to pass breaking news to journalists in mainstream media houses.

McQuail (2010) posits that the mass media has transformed greatly from early 20th century's one-way, one-directional and undifferentiated flow to undifferentiated mass. He elaborates that what has led to this revolution is technology, which is characterised by interactive complex networks of communication. This technological advancement has risen to 'new media', where blogs fall. The new media has entered into the sphere of mass communication and facilitated citizens to be journalists, thus, having consequences on traditional media.

The impact therefore, is proliferation of the citizen journalists (bloggers) leading to a brand of journalism and journalists without accountability, who have no respect to journalistic tenets like fairness, accuracy truth and balance hence, undermining the quality of the profession (Campbell, 2010). According to Knight (2007) journalists have professional

stated codes of ethics; they check facts and benefit from professional editing to produce credible news. However, bloggers don't observe most of the systems in journalism. One person reports, selects, edits and prioritizes what goes out to the public.

Studies show that despite these shortcomings, audiences still rate some bloggers highly. In a US, study on credibility of online newspapers versus blogs Johnson and Kaye (2004) after sampling 3,747 respondents found that only 42.7% thought online newspapers were very credible. On the other hand, 73.6% believed bloggers were very credible. A paltry 3.5% thought bloggers were not credible.

A fact to note, therefore, is that bloggers and blogs are closing in on the influence traditional media used to have on agenda setting, educating, entertaining and informing the public (McCombs, 1999). To adapt to the new media environment, according to US The State of the News Media (2005) report; "Journalists must aspire in the new media landscape to be the one source that can best help citizens discover what to believe and what to disbelieve—a shift from the role of gatekeeper to that of authenticator or referee. To do that, news organisations have to make some significant changes; rather than merely monitoring the official corridors of power, news organisations may need to monitor the new alternative means of public discussion as well."

Statement of the Problem

Blogging is an occupation that provides jobs opportunity to thousands of youths in Africa and across the world. However the bloggers must ensure that they operate within the standard journalistic code of ethics. The paper tries to establish roles of new media in particular bloggers in responsible journalism in Kenya. The intent is to find out whether the bloggers are aware of journalistic tenets and whether they operate strictly under them. Bloggers have brought a completely new dimension in the mass media industry. There is a sharp shift in focus by the audience from the mainstream media to bloggers for news stories, breaking news and confirmation of events. Bloggers outshine the established media houses basically because they provide a free interaction with

their audience at a relatively cheaper cost and convenience than media houses.

The influence of blogger has risen so fast giving them recognition as key participants in provision of information and news in the changing media environment. This is noted by (Dimitrakopoulou, 2010). What is notable is that a small number of web bloggers have become highly influential within the blogosphere, a phenomenon commonly referred to as inter-media agenda-setting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to assess roles played by new media particularly bloggers in responsible journalism in Kenya. This is with a view of providing solutions to the growth of joblessness in emerging economies.

Objectives

- i. Establish whether bloggers consider themselves journalists.
- ii. Explore roles played by bloggers in journalism.
- iii. Ascertain whether bloggers aware of journalistic ethics.
- iv. Examine roles do bloggers play in promoting or undermining responsible journalism.

Research Questions

- (i) Are bloggers journalists?
- (ii) What roles do bloggers play in journalism?
- (iii) Are bloggers aware of journalistic ethics?
- (iv) What roles do bloggers play in promoting or undermining responsible journalism?

Scope of the study

In investigating the role of bloggers in responsible journalism in Kenya, this study mainly focused on bloggers and journalists from two leading multi-media houses in Kenya, namely Standard Group and Media Max Group. The two media houses own radio, TV, newspapers and online platforms. The two organisations utilise the same journalists across most of their platforms, that is, a reporter will write a story that will appear in the newspaper and online site. Leading Kenyan bloggers were

selected by the study, (using snow ball sampling technique) because their blogs are interconnected. Being a qualitative study it employed descriptive survey. Individual interviews, focused group discussion were used to collect data. The FDGs were held on a blog specifically created for this research.

Literature Review

Nature of Journalists

There is a wide debate over the nature of a journalist. Should bloggers be considered part of the journalistic community or should only certain types of bloggers enter the ranks of journalism? Professionals in the traditional media are divided about whether to consider blogs as part of the journalistic community. After all, paying attention to them means acknowledging and legitimizing a potential competitor and critic. Williams (2004) put it that: "If they adopt them, it's like having a spastic arm-they can't control it."

The twist here is the fact that bloggers approach their task differently from traditional journalists. The question of whether the definition of a journalist should include bloggers is one with which many news professionals are still wrestling. The solution may well be a distinction between bloggers who look like traditional journalists—who have large readerships, work for organizations, and are primarily in the business of newsgathering and reporting—and those who do not.

According to future technologies forecaster Saffo (2005) blogging, chat groups and adding comments to online articles are obvious examples, but they are just the beginning. In the TV era, it was hard, if not impossible to participate, but now in the new world of personal media, the exact reverse is the case: it is hard to merely be a bystander.

Journalists versus Bloggers

Every new means of news dissemination has trumpeted itself as superior to existing media. Bloggers view themselves as part of a new medium that is superior to existing traditional media. Blogs' chest thumping over traditional media is a self-protection strategy. As each new medium arrives, it is required to elbow its way into the universe of existing media. That means

bloggers must engage in continual comparison with traditional media in order to carve their own audience niche. One political scientist heralded blogs because they “provide a channel for authentic expression that is free from the repressive controls of traditional media.” That is why bloggers feed the image of competition between blogs and traditional media. In a competitive environment, it is clear that, despite their differences on ideology, blogs almost uniformly criticize existing media—and one survey of bloggers found the vast majority used their blogs for that very purpose. Such criticism usually centers on media bias. Conservative bloggers fault journalists for catering to the left, while liberal bloggers often write that the news media are cowed into serving the interests of the right wing.

Also, competition between journalists and bloggers is unusual because the two groups overlap. Most bloggers have traditional journalism backgrounds. Nevertheless, bloggers’ comparisons stress their superiority, particularly in the accuracy of their reporting, over traditional media. One blogger wrote: “So far, the blogosphere has a far better record of honesty and accuracy than mainstream media bloggers also point out that they can fix errors more easily because they don’t have to wait for the next day’s printing. Some bloggers also claimed that checks and balances in the blogosphere are far stronger and more effective than the alleged ‘checks and balances’ of the mainstream media, which, in the absence of political and intellectual diversity, may not operate at all.

Yet some bloggers view journalists as fundamentally dishonest when using a standard of objectivity to distinguish the traditional media from blogs or others who pretend to act as news reporters. However, bloggers dispute that the traditional media are masquerading as objective purveyors of information. The difference, according to bloggers, is the straightforward nature of their partisanship. Traditional media, they contend, are biased but refuse to admit it. Bloggers also are biased, they say, but don’t lie about it. According to Smolkin (2004) journalists’ failure to tell the audience their own views makes their news product fundamentally flawed: Nicholas (2005) posits that “I am unwilling to trust the conclusions of

somebody who won’t tell me their opinions and background.”

This allegation implies that blogging is the true journalism while traditional journalism is false because it assumes that the news professional can be objective. This however, is really an attack not just on the liberal media or press bias; it’s an attack on professionalism itself, on the idea that there could be disinterested reporters. Bloggers also see the conflict between them and traditional journalism as one between the past and the future. They decry the media as outdated, relics of the past. Rieder (2005) a blogger labeled news organizations as “obstinate, lumbering, big-media dinosaurs. The bloggers, on the other hand, are the future—the future of information gathering. The direct danger is that web blogging will drive a powerful new form of amateur journalism as millions of Net users—young people especially—take on the role of columnist, reporter, analyst, and publishers while fashioning their own personal broadcasting networks Lasica (2001).

Still others argue blogs, particularly the A-list ones, are worthy of response. They contend these wide-reaching blogs should be held to a higher standard than other blogs with small or non-existent audiences. The argument itself is underlined by an assumption that a medium attracting large audiences should adhere to journalistic standards in serving their readers. It is, in essence, an assumption of equivalency with traditional media, thus making blogs true competitors of traditional journalism.

Are blogs the New Journalism?

The problem with bloggers’ relations with journalists is that blogs aren’t uniformly defined. Some bloggers view themselves as journalists, even the “new journalists.” They disseminate news to an audience, particularly information their readers may not get elsewhere. Therefore they seek to abide by standards of objectivity in reporting Loyalka (2005). They do investigative research and they have been called “participatory journalists” because they feature interactivity and participation over observation. Melissa (2005) terms Blogs as “black market journalism” because their product is outside of the journalism system dominated by large media conglomerates. Bloggers who perceive

themselves as journalists would not necessarily argue that they are unbiased. The news presentation can still reflect their own perceptions of events and issues. After all, they argue, traditional journalists are biased as well and shape news gathering accordingly. Other bloggers view themselves primarily as commentators, not journalists.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The intention of this paper is to examine role of new media particularly bloggers in responsible journalism. The study employed descriptive survey.

Instruments of Data Collection

To establish the current state of responsible journalism in Kenya in-depth individual interviews and focused group discussion interviews were conducted with 30 journalist and 30 bloggers. The FDGs were conducted on a blog specifically created for this research. Focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews and questionnaires are considered the most commonly used and efficient methods of gathering qualitative data. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) they believe that when thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and the world of assumptions are involved the researcher needs to understand the deeper world that can only be captured through face to face interactions. Mc-Namara (1999) says that interviews are predominantly useful form of getting the story behind a participant's experience. Kvale (1996) says that qualitative research interviews endeavour to establish meaning of people's experiences on a particular subject. Based on these views the research is principally based on interviews as research methodology considering the fact that the study is seeking people's experiences and views on role of blogs as new media in responsible journalism. The use of semi structured questionnaires interview was preferred because of their ability to get the respondent's opinion through the use of open ended question (Mack, 2008).

In a focus group discussion interviews, small number of people sit together to discuss the topic of interest. The groups were small to avoid

members feeling intimidated hence encouraging them to freely and actively participate. The discussions were tape recorded, then transcribed and analysed. Krueger and Casey (2000) note that the researcher is supposed to listen not just to the content of focus group discussions, but also for the emotions, ironies, contradiction and tension.

The questionnaires were emailed and dropped to journalists. On the other hand, the bloggers were contacted through emails, their blogs and social media sites, specifically, Twitter and Facebook, where the researcher posted the questionnaire to reach respondents. The study employed qualitative data analysis procedures. In particular, the data from interviews was coded and categorised into various themes arising from the questionnaires to reflect views from respondents. The themes included competition, story ideas, impact and training. Each theme was coded, for instance, competitors was coded 1 and then analysed.

Sampling Procedure

The respondents were sampled using snow ball sampling techniques. Journalists were sampled from Standard Group and Media Max Group. The researcher selected journalists from TV, radio and newspapers. Standard Group has about 100 journalists while Nation Media Group 200 in their Nairobi offices. A sample size of between 10% to 20% of the population suffices in survey studies (Babbie, 2005). Therefore, the sample that was adopted by this study was 10% of the population in each media house.

Target Population

The study target population was majorly journalists in mainstream media and bloggers who write on different topics. The study targeted a population of 30 journalists in the mainstream media, 30 bloggers. While there are four major media houses in Kenya, namely Standard Group, Media Max, Radio Nation Media Group and Africa Group, the study focused on the first two media houses as they are the largest in the country and run some of the country's vibrant online news sites and have included bloggers on the websites. The two giant companies also have the largest population of traditional and online journalists.

Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of a research instrument refers to an extent to which it does measure what it is supposed to measure while reliability is the ability of a research instrument to yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The research instrument was validated for content and face validity. To ascertain content validity, the researcher consulted the supervisor who reviewed the instruments.

Methods of Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative data analysis procedures. In particular, the data from interviews was coded and categorised into various themes arising from the questionnaires to reflect views from respondents. The themes included competition, story ideas, impact and training. Each theme was coded, for instance, competitors was coded 1 and then analysed.

Ethical Considerations

The study participants were informed of the purpose of the study and asked for their consent prior to the participation. Adequate measures were also taken to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This presents the study findings from questionnaires administered separately to journalists and bloggers and in-depth interviews by key informants (bloggers and journalists). The study sought to examine the role of bloggers in responsible journalism as they seek to inform, educate and entertain the public.

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings from Journalists

Blogs' Readership

It's evident that Blogs have gained popularity in the recent past, attracting both the public and journalists. The researcher sought to find out if journalists read blogs. The results showed that 28 of the respondents read blogs, although 2 said they do not read them. The reasons for reading or not reading were varied. Those journalists who read blogs said they found them analytical (7), informative (7), and humorous (3),

had good writing style (2) and offered juicy gossip (9).

One journalist who reads blogs noted; "Reading blogs is my thing because I get variety of political, entertainment and breaking news as well as the new way of writing blogs." (Research data, June, 2016)

Those who do not read found blogs too opinionated (1) and not interesting (1). *"The problem with Blogs is that they are too opinionated such that they are so personalised and information is tilted to fit personal leanings and preferences,"* said a respondent. (Research data, 2016)

This is in agreement with the observation of Baresch *et al.*, (2011) whose research on blogs found out that the distinctive characteristic of blogs is that they give more importance to opinions and personal interpretation of public affairs.

Do blogs have Important Information for Journalists?

This research asked journalists whether they find information in blogs useful. Among 30 journalists interviewed, 28 indicated that most information in blogs is useful; including some who do not read the blogs, but 2 of the journalists thought information on blogs was not useful. *"Of course the information on blogs is useful because bloggers are bold and brave to publish what the mainstream media may be reluctant to touch and they also offer information that mainstream media may not consider important because they are not bound by any principles, their style is also different,"* a respondent who finds information useful said (Research data, 2016). *"A whole lot of information isn't useful because it is usually written from the blogger's day-to-day encounters rather than introspection. While you may not always learn from it, sometimes it is comforting and entertaining,"* said a journalist (Research data, 2016). Kang (2010) who in his study on blogs credibility in the US indicated that audiences find the content of the blogs informative and insightful, Habermas (1998) in public sphere theory defines a public sphere as a forum where people can debate issues as happens on blogs. They have become an important public sphere. The findings of this study are in agreement with the above researches.

Bloggers' work versus Journalists'

This study sought to find out if bloggers are replacing and taking the place of journalists. Just like journalists, bloggers too inform, entertain and educate their audiences. Most people in Kenya, 21.6 million, having access to internet (Communication Authority of Kenya, 2014), bloggers influence is growing rapidly. The results showed that 27 respondents thought that bloggers were not doing the work of journalists. Only 3 believed bloggers were doing journalists' work. *Bloggers have their own way of doing things without regard to any rules or code of conduct, while we journalists follow our principles and a code of conduct. They do not give any regard to balancing opinions and checking facts, which is the work of journalists,*" noted a respondent who said bloggers are not doing journalists work (Research data, 2016). *"We basically do the same work because there are many instances where we jostle to break stories to the public"* (Research data, 2016).

However, 19 of the 30 journalists believed that bloggers were not stealing the limelight from them. *"Despite being popular, blogs are not carrying the day at the expense journalists because most of the information is sensational and unreliable, full of personal opinions,"* said a respondent (Research data, June, 2016). None the less, 11 confirmed that bloggers were stealing the limelight from them, and these were some of their views: *"It's true going by recent research that blogs are carrying the day at the expense of journalists, especially online. This is because people have less time to read long serious articles and prefer soft content like gossip, so they turn to blogs,"* said a journalist (Research data, 2016).

Most of the journalists interviewed, 27, believed that bloggers are not professional because they do not confirm facts, write balanced stories and are not objective. *"Bloggers are unprofessional because, unlike with the mainstream media, they have no laws governing their work. Some bloggers just present false information knowingly because of such loopholes. That is not professionalism,"* said a journalist (Research data, 2016). These findings correspond with the findings of research by Lowrey and Mackay (2008) who noted that journalists have traditionally viewed online journalism as being less than professional. McQuail's New Media Theory (2010) states that new media platforms like blogs are characterised by lack of professionalism and

problems of trust and reliability, qualities that bloggers lack.

Impact of blogs on Journalism

The study sought to find out from journalists if they believe blogs and bloggers have any impact on their profession. The results show that most of the journalists who participated in the study, 27, agreed that blogs have major impact on the journalism since journalists now report what has already been blogged about. *"Today Journalists have to think of Day Two journalism because they cannot publish breaking news the next day since bloggers would have done that previous day,"* observed a journalist (Research data, 2016).

This result is in agreement with Lowrey and Mackay (2008) who found out that blogs in US have an impact on the way journalists practice their profession. The impact was evident in all three stages of the professional process, but particularly in the inference stage, which includes reporting and decisions about newsworthiness. McQuail (2010) observes in the New Media Theory that new media has changed the way traditional media functions as journalists no longer have influence on what audiences read as blogs publish information in advance.

The impact, however, goes further than competing to publish stories as attested by the results of the study. Most journalists, 23 of those interviewed, are now getting ideas for their stories from blogs. The blogs are also eating into online advertisement revenue streams. *"It's amazing that Journalists sometimes get tips from blogs and then dig deeper for stories. Most Bloggers sometimes challenge journalists to get the information and bring it to the mainstream,"* noted a journalist (Research data, 2016). *"Online, they now compete for advertisement, the major lifeblood for journalism, by attracting more numbers. Advertisers go for platforms with more spaces. In turn, mainstream news sites are forced either to buy out blogs or go with the same standards of news,"* said another respondent (Research data, 2016).

Few journalists who said bloggers have not affected journalism identified the limited reach of the internet as the main reason. In areas with low internet penetration, journalists still hold the sway on what the public talk about and thus backed by the massive resources of their

companies, they still have great influence on dissemination information.

News Breaking

Journalists who took part in the study were unanimous (30) that if their organisations do not break a story, certainly bloggers would, especially a story that comes with legal challenges since most bloggers are not constrained by such barriers. Journalists, therefore, strive to be the first to break stories. However, as they do this, they do not compete with bloggers. *"Bloggers would break stories that my organisation may consider a legal landmine. They would be happy because this gives them mileage as they appear to be authoritative,"* said a journalist (Research data, 2016). *"Traditional news media have longer checks through which a breaking news item has to go through to be published. For journalists, accuracy delays breaking it; for example, the death of prominent personalities in Kenya is often 'announced' by bloggers before traditional news sites get it. This is because journalists try to wait for official communication from family or government to avoid embarrassing moments of having to apologise. Blogs on the other hand may publish right from rumours and that is how they may end up breaking news ahead of journalists,"* observed a respondent (Research data, 2014).

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings from Bloggers

Are bloggers Journalists

Bloggers and journalists do the same work, therefore the research sought to find out if bloggers consider themselves journalists since there is little distinction from what the two do. The outcome was that 6 out of respondents said they were journalists because they educate, entertain, inform and set agenda for the public, which are key functions of journalists. On the other hand, 24 of the bloggers interviewed did not consider themselves journalists. This is because they don't follow a prescribed code of conduct, they publish their stories themselves and do not earn from the occupation. This differ with that of Zúñiga *et al.*, (2011) who in their study in the US on blogging as a journalistic experience note that bloggers perceive their work as journalism, the reason they quote sources, check facts, and post corrections.

Roles Bloggers Play in Journalism

The study found out that bloggers perform the following broad roles; setting the agenda, educating the mass, entertaining and informing. Most of the bloggers said the role is to inform 9, setting agenda 15, educate 4 and entertain 2. *"As a blogger my role is to inform readers on stories that are not adequately addressed by mainstream journalists. I also teach bloggers on how to make their blogs more successful,"* said a blogger (Research data, 2016). These roles are in agreement with Dimitrakopoulou (2010) observation that weblogs are offering complementary information on news and current affairs.

Bloggers' Perceptions towards Journalists

Among the bloggers who were interviewed, 23 believed that journalists are objective, factual and ethical, the key tenets of the profession. However, 7 of the respondents said journalists do not follow the tenets of their work. *"Most journalists are objective and factual but many times they lose focus because of individual political inclinations. They are also bribed and given gifts thus losing objectivity in their news stories,"* said a blogger (Research data, 2016).

Bloggers Awareness of Journalistic Code of Ethics and Training

Bloggers just like journalists do collect and disseminate information. This is why the government set to broaden the definition of journalists in the Media Act 2013 to include "media enterprises, journalists, media practitioners, foreign journalists and consumers of media services" – anyone who publishes information online regularly. While journalists undergo training, bloggers don't. This study sought to find out if bloggers think that they should be trained as journalists.

The results indicate that most bloggers (19) do not want to be trained as journalists. They believed that blogging and journalism are different; hence training is not important for them. They noted that undergoing training in journalism, would translate losing their identity. The dilemma here is the fact that a good number of bloggers consider themselves as journalists. *"Never! Bloggers are not journalists out rightly hence no need for journalistic training. We write our blogs our own way hence we don't want any form of journalistic dictatorship"* a respondent noted (Research data, 2016).

This is indifference with Chung *et al.*, (2007) whose research on bloggers and training stated that bloggers recognise the importance of learning traditional news values, original reporting and the benefits of editing, so that they can be perceived as credible sources. However, one of those who believed training would help noted that *"It's prudent that we should be trained as journalists. It will help us to be more relevant and trustworthy. We will also be more responsible when writing blog posts."* (Research data, 2016). The study also sought to establish whether the bloggers are aware of the content of journalistic code of ethics. The results revealed that many (29) of the bloggers were aware of the existence of the journalistic code of ethics. However, among them only 1 was aware of the content of the journalistic code of ethics. This was because of the journalistic training background. *"I am aware of the code of ethics for journalists but not the content. I don't need to know the content because they do not concern me directly"*. One blogger noted (Source Researcher June 2016). On the other hand, one blogger admitted to know the content of journalistic code of ethics, but was quick to add that the respondent has undergone a two year diploma training in journalism. *"I understand the code of conduct for journalists pretty well. I was trained for a diploma in journalism, although the code is too restrictive and suppressive to new ideas in news writing and publishing."* One blogger noted (Source Researcher, 2016).

Motive of Running Blogs

There a myriad motive for blogging. The researcher wanted to find out what is the main motivation that drives bloggers to do their work, yet many bloggers, unlike journalists, do not get paid by any media organization. The results indicate that 3 of respondents do the work out of passion or their love for writing. They want to get to the public their thoughts and feeling. It further showed that, 4 do the work to get comments from readers and see how they think of what they write about and 23 write in order to make money from the blogs by attracting traffic to the site. The more the people they attract the more the advertisement they get. This therefore translates into job opportunities for thousands of youths across Kenya and Africa as a whole. These findings sharply contrast that of

Kramer (2004), whose research notes that most bloggers perceive their work as service to the community as they try to fill the gaps left by the mainstream media in informing, educating and entertaining the public.

Role of Bloggers in Responsible Journalism

Responsibility in journalism constitutes fundamental aspects in any consideration of the process of mass communication, from academic, professional, political and legal point of view. Involved are responsibility of individual journalists, ethics of the profession, the owners of the mass media and the responsibility of the state- in whose jurisdiction, the mass media operate. This study looks at individual blogger responsibility in journalism. From the focus group discussion as well as interviews, the following came out as the role of the bloggers in responsible journalism.

Viral Reporting

All blogs and social media have accelerated the speed of the newsgathering, dissemination and reporting process. The pressure to get news out fast has long characterized the news business. Years before the voice reporting (radio), print media (newspapers) printed several editions in a day so as to deliver the latest and up to date information. With the introduction television and more so the 24-hour television news channels in the '80s catapulted the major news network divisions to broadcast news more frequently. In Kenya only the standard group media introduced a 24hour news channel in 2016 called KTN News channel. KTN News was a big welcome for the lovers of news around the clock. The introduction of the Internet in the mid 90s beckoned a new venue for constant news transmission, which required a steady stream of news content from media websites. The driving pressure for Journalists now became the strict and stringent deadline imposed by media on them by their own news organization's embrace of new media.

The latest source of pressure is blogosphere. The characteristic of the medium is instantaneous updating; hence the blogosphere offers a near-constant content feed. Bloggers do not need the time wasting bureaucracy of

traditional media to produce a news media story. The media first decides whether to cover an event or not. If yes, then it assigns a journalist to report on it. This is followed by editing process where the story goes through a chain of editors before being approved for publication. In the case of the newspaper, time is needed to physically publish the story. Online news for the website skips the production stage, but still must go through the rest of the cycle. For television, the process is more complex due to the constraints of film crew allocation and placement, as well as production requirements, apart from live coverage which is instantaneous and costly. On the other hand, a blogger can post to his or her website in minutes. There is no prior assignment, no need to physically attend the event, no organizational layers, no production time. This has given rise citizen journalism especially where the bloggers allow citizens to participate in discussion. KTN has rolled out a blog where stories, views, news, reports and events from citizens are published under subtitle 'u-report'.

This upper hand provides blogs an important niche in delivering breaking news. In an era of 24-hour news cycles and audience expectation of near instantaneous coverage, traditional news media organizations face unmatched enormous pressures to be fast and first in delivering the latest news. Blogs can match, and typically exceed, the traditional media's ability to reach an audience quickly. Such information is ever circulated like bush fire and in no time it goes viral as bloggers pick the breaking news from other bloggers and post it on their walls and websites. The concept of exclusivity does not occur to blogger as the traditional media seeks to cover and break the breaking news exclusively. This is in an attempt to stay ahead of the pack. Bloggers lack the surveillance and newsgathering capabilities of traditional media, hence the kind of story that blogs can more easily scoop are those that news media have but don't report because they discount their newsworthiness, or those that emanate from a source in the blogosphere.

Strangling Professionalism

Another role in journalism is the ability to frame a story in a way that constitutes the 'first impression' for the news audience, commonly

referred to as "first-mover advantage in socially constructing interpretive frames for understanding current events," (Drezner and Farrell, 2004).

As we concentrate on the speed of the blogosphere, we also should consider the absence of professional standards found within it. This is because journalists are trained to follow certain norms and codes of professional ethics in the construction of a story bloggers have no such guidelines. They are also unconstrained by journalistic standards of reporting. A blogger need not confirm a tip or check the authority of the source, though some may choose to do so in order to maintain their credibility. Andrew Sullivan as quoted by Kurtz (2001) said blogging is "a way you can throw ideas around without having to fully back them up, just to see what response you get." Some bloggers often brag about their failure to check rumors this is because to them immediacy is more important than accuracy, and humor is more important than accuracy (Julie, 2004). However, this type of competition exerts pressures on traditional journalists who are used to playing by a set of rules. While one operates under journalistic rules of obtaining confirmation, which typically takes time, the other competitors, the bloggers, are able to ignore such norms. This can entice leading journalists to cast aside their journalistic training in the rush to be first.

Brown Envelope Journalism

For ages Journalists have viewed themselves as media watchdogs who reveal politicians' mistakes and government errors. This role became idealized in the wake of the chicken gate, golden berg and Eurobond, among other scandals. But bloggers challenge that supposed "watchdog" role. They contend that, rather than checking politicians, traditional journalists have always developed cozy personal relationships with politicians and other elites. Bloggers claim they, not traditional journalists, are the real watchdogs today. They dispute that bloggers can be more critical of political insiders because, unlike journalists, they sit at a healthy distance from politicians. Bloggers' argument speaks to the inherent ethical dilemma of a permanent press corps—that is, how to stay close enough to sources to get information but not so close as to

become co-opted, Robertson (2002). Most journalists are on the payrolls of politicians to cover them favourably or even some are paid to kill a story concerning the big and mighty in the society.

Watching the Watchdog

Blogsphere has turned the tables upside down by making the traditional media themselves objects of scrutiny. Most Bloggers examine the news media's content thoroughly and publicize media mistakes. According to Loyalka (2005) one blogger warned the press that he would scrutinize every aspect of media content and the level of scrutiny will make your editors blush. Bloggers are the new media watchdog who steadily critic media bias and slant. Conservative bloggers particularly charge media outlets with having a liberal bias and twisting events to conform to that bias. On the other hand, liberal bloggers have attacked the conservative media as well.

However, both liberal and conservative bloggers have at times joined to criticize the traditional media. Most bloggers enjoy pointing out traditional media mistakes and forcing corrections and apologies from what they call "big media." Blogs focus on missed stories about journalists themselves and their profession which they seldom criticize. Hence, bloggers view themselves as checking journalists' tendency not to criticize their own profession. In fact, mainstream journalists are reluctant to cover their own organizations critically for fear of losing their jobs. Political bloggers also take on a watchdog role by including those elements of a story that the traditional media ignore. Bloggers mediate the completion of the story—offering perspectives that traditional media do not, especially conservative bloggers who view traditional media as one-sided.

Sensational Reporting

Bloggers are over time known for starting, spreading and cultivating rumours. Most stories published have the lowest credibility ever. Rumour mongering is the major characteristic of blogs just like it is for social media. Long before the death of first lady Mama Lucy Kibaki some bloggers had broken the news of her death before her actual death. It is now the norm for many Kenyan blogs to claim death of many

prominent people. Most blogs make claims about many personal issues and social issues regarding many people who matter in the society. Relationship and family status are the most rumored in many blogs. In Kenya many bloggers have been arrested and interrogated over spreading rumours and sensationally reporting misleading information. Recently when Chase Bank collapsed one blogger David Mukunzi Zawadi was arrested for peddling falsehood that sparked anxiety over the fate of Chase Bank prompting depositors to flock the bank and make huge withdrawal at once. The central bank of Kenya governor Dr. Njoroge said that the bank faced liquidity difficulties following inaccurate reports by the blogger indicating that the bank was closing down.

Curving a Niche for Audience

Traditional media today have faced increasing competitive pressures from new information sources. Twenty-four hour news channels such as KTN News, u-report and Internet news sites offer the most politically interested citizens an unending flow of news. Competition begins with the traditional media competing under a yoke of audience expectations. Media organizations provide news across a broad range of topics—politics, sports, entertainment, weather, etc. Even within political news, news media rarely devote their broadcasts to a single topic. The audience expects stories on varying topics because they expect to be informed across a range of developments. Bloggers however, don't have the same obligation to report the news of the day. Any particular blog can, and will, ignore the vast majority of stories the news media cover and hone in on one or two topics for a post, the day, or even several days. This distinction in roles can be seen in the Trent Lott story. While the political blogs could devote time to this story, news media also had the responsibility to report other breaking news. Bloggers also view themselves as competitors with specialized news papers.

De-Bureaucratizing Writing

Blogs still value writing that is not subject to an editorial process as it has its roots in personal journals. Bloggers argue that the absence of a news hierarchy is a distinct advantage. They hold opinion that the bureaucracy of traditional

news media is out dated. In response, mainstream journalists have started their own blogs, more so separate from their organizations. Also, news media organizations have created blogs in order to attract readers. The style is more real-time, informal, and opinion-laced—much like the blogosphere in general. The blogosphere poses new dilemmas for news professionals. Journalistic blogs potentially make the newsgathering process more transparent.

Editing process is fundamental to the journalistic work but unpalatable to the blogosphere culture. Editing practices vary. For example, the New York Times blog is edited but others are not. These other organizations may share the view of one editor who claims editing is not necessary because journalist-bloggers are long time reporters who apply the tenets of good journalism to their Web blogs.

Including the Public Blogging has presented another dilemma for traditional media—how to handle the potential for increased involvement of the public. Bloggers challenge media claims that the news presentation must be dominated by trained professionals. They bristle at the assumption that the news media product is more legitimate because it is written and edited by professional journalists. One blogger opined that just because you don't get paid for writing a blog doesn't mean you're any less authoritative. While traditional journalists have developed an ethic of professionalism via journalistic education, professional societies, and professional codes of behavior, bloggers have none of these. Many are news amateurs. One traditional reporter said the power of blogs was like pistol in the hands of a 19-year-old.

Liberating Journalism

Blogging began as a public form of personal expression, much like writing a personal diary that is photocopied and handed out to perfect strangers. One survey of bloggers found that the most common reason for blogging was to “document their personal experiences and share them with others. And the most common topic of blog writing the bloggers said was my life and experiences. That style carries over into political blogs. It was important that the reader be unaware of reporters' personal views. Professional norms discouraged personal

expression. Over the past several decades, the objectivity model has been eroded by successive challenges from the “new journalism movement, advocacy journalism, and public journalism. Bloggers and their blogs are the most recent addition to the anti-objectivity trend of the new century. However, what differentiates blogs from these previous movements is that they arise outside of journalism. One blogger explained that blogs “tend to be impressionistic, telegraphic, raw, honest, individualistic, highly opinionated and passionate, often striking an emotional chord.”

Becoming bloggers, journalists have been freed from the constraints of objective journalism. While blogging, they are more likely to express personal views, make unsubstantiated assertions, and abandon their reliance on sources. The norms of the blogosphere are beginning to spill over into, and influence, the norms of journalism. Some Journalists have begun to act more like other bloggers and less like objective journalists. As a matter of fact, adherence to the standard format of news writing on a media blog would evoke criticism from the blogosphere and, in the current blogosphere and chase away readers. The so called liberation, however, leads to the question of how far it will extend into journalism. Will the blog writing style come to dominate outside the blogosphere—that is, journalists' traditional formats of news presentation?

Summary of the Findings

This study set out to assess how blogging is affecting journalism and how journalists are responding to arising challenges. The research was guided by the following questions:

- i. Are bloggers journalists? (ii) What roles do bloggers play in journalism? (iii) Are bloggers aware of journalistic ethics? (iv) What roles do bloggers play in promoting or undermining responsible journalism?

The following are the findings of the study. A large number of the bloggers surveyed said that they do not consider themselves journalists despite educating, entertaining, informing and setting agenda for the public. This is because

while journalists are trained, follow a code of conduct and ethics and have to take their stories for publishing in respective newspapers, TV and radio; bloggers operate liberally and publish their stories themselves. This shows that bloggers want to their occupation to remain distinct from journalism and therefore maintain their identity. Most of bloggers surveyed noted that journalists are objective, factual and ethical. The minority who believe otherwise said journalists are influenced by advertisers and their sources thus they are not ethical. Most of the bloggers sampled said they should not be trained as journalists because blogging and journalism are different. And that if they undergo training in journalism, they would lose their identity. This is an indication that bloggers want to be independent and clinch their own part to remain relevant in the competitive media environment.

Majority of bloggers said their role is to inform, educate, analyse entertain and also set the agenda for the nation. Some bloggers surveyed were journalists, with majority of those surveyed saying that they read blogs because they find stories on the sites analytical, informative and humorous, have good writing style and offer juicy gossip. Those who did not read them found them too opinionated and not interesting. The massive readership of blogs by journalists is an indication of the huge impact blogs have on mainstream media, including acting as source of ideas. This brings out an important role bloggers play, which is breaking news. With the advent of blogs, the time when journalists would suppress information for one reason or another is long gone. The bloggers surveyed further said they are motivated by three things, the major one being making money. Others include passion to write and get their thoughts out and the desire to get readers' comments.

The Society of professional journalist highlights the code of conduct for journalists as follows: Seek the truth and report it, minimize harm, Act independently and be accountable. This code is universal for all practicing journalists to follow. The study found out that most bloggers are aware of the existence of the journalistic code of conduct. Yet they are not aware of the content of the code of conduct. Most bloggers think that the code does not concern them as it does not

affect them directly. Those of this view did not consider themselves as journalist. It's only one that had training in journalism that was aware but still held the journalistic code of conduct in contempt and despise.

The study found out that bloggers have a number of roles in undermining responsible journalism. The absence of journalistic code of conduct in play for bloggers is a danger to responsible journalism. Lack of editing, freedom of expression and absence of checks and balances degrades responsible journalism. Bloggers thrive on rumours and heresies that are not factual. Their information or news is nothing to go by as it's not trustworthy. This actually demeans the purpose of credibility in news reporting. The casual nature of bloggers information is something to worry about in responsible journalism. The fact that bloggers do not consider themselves as journalists yet they are deep right in journalistic business is a recipe for disaster in responsible journalism. However, bloggers can be praised for enhancing responsible journalism by being brave and reporting information that gate keepers in mainstream media can't let go. Likewise blogger have kept mainstream journalism in cheeks and balances over brown envelop journalism as well as promoted citizen journalism that have given a voice to the masses.

Conclusion

This finding shows that some of the bloggers started the forums to offer audiences an alternative to what the mainstream media publishes. However this should be done under acceptable norms that govern them. It is evident that bloggers do the work of journalist and therefore they are journalists. The study therefore posits that journalists and blogger do the same work and often complement each other in informing, educating, analyzing events, entertaining, setting agenda for the nation and breaking news. Motivating factor for the bloggers is making money apart from passion for writing and getting readers comments. Therefore blogging is a trade and an occupation just like journalism and employs thousands of young people in the country.

It is evident that bloggers do the work of journalist and therefore they are journalists. The study therefore posits that journalists and

blogger do the same work and often complement each other in informing, educating, analyzing events, entertaining, setting agenda for the nation and breaking news. Motivating factor for the bloggers is making money apart from passion for writing and getting readers comments. Therefore blogging is a trade and an occupation just like journalism and employs thousands of young people in the country. The Kenyan media act 2013 defines journalism as "the collecting, writing, editing and presenting of news or news articles in newspapers and magazines, radio and television broadcasts, in the internet or any other manner as may be prescribed". This definition therefore entirely includes bloggers. The act also gives prominence to the Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics. This underscores the need for bloggers to learn and work within this code of ethics. From the discussion the study shows that bloggers do more in undermining responsible journalism than enhancing it. Bloggers ought to strive to be sources that can help their audiences discover what to believe and what to disbelieve. This thus, requires digging deeper into a claim or piece of information to find truth and talking to experts, in Kenya's changing media landscape, where audiences are turning to online platforms for consumption of news and information, in order to promote responsible journalism.

Recommendation

Bloggers need proper training in journalism as well as internal mechanisms to help them regulate themselves. This can be achieved through formation of an association where members register, formulate their code of conduct and adhere to it. Those who do not follow these rules must be punished. The governing body will help them check facts, be objective and make their stories and opinion pieces balanced. There is need for proper regulation to enable bloggers streamline their operations. Currently, bloggers operate in a grey area since they believe that they are not journalists yet their work is not different from that of journalists. They need to be regulated to make them responsible and accountable, just like journalists. This should be taken up by policy makers in the ministry of communication

to formulate relevant policies that will regulate the work of bloggers.

Most of the bloggers sampled said they do not need training in journalism. However, going by their growing influence on audiences, bloggers need to be trained so that they can perform their roles better. Institutions of higher learning need to come up with curriculum that would fully equip bloggers with necessary skills that will make their work worthwhile, rewarding and beneficial to society.

Suggestion for Further Research

A study on the content of various blogs in Kenya will go a long way to bring out what various blogs concentrate on in their blogs. It will also bring out the content of citizen journalism and the need for regulation.

In a study on credibility of online newspapers vs blogs in US, Johnson and Kaye (2004), found that only 42.7% of readers thought online newspapers were very credible. On the other hand, 73.6% believed bloggers were very credible. A paltry 3.5% thought bloggers were not credible. A study on blogs' credibility among readers in Kenya would help ascertain how the sites serve audiences and how people regard them. Further research on blogs should also tackle typology and conversations happening on the sites amongst audiences since they are currently one of the most open forums for readers.

REFERENCES

- Babbie, E. (2005). *The Basics of Social Research*. (3rd Ed.), Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Baecker (2011) *Query Public(s) in the Next Society >>Artistic Technology Research<< as [Despositif] and Synergetic Discipline for the Agency of Research and Development in the Next (Media) Cultures*. At <http://artistictechnology.at>
- Baresch, B. (2011). *Blogging as a Journalistic Practice: A Model Linking Perception, Motivation, and Behaviour*. University of Texas at Austin, USA.
- Bosman Julie, "First with the Scoop, If Not the Truth," *New York Times*, April 18, 2004, section 9, p. 10.
- Campbell, V. (2010). *The Myth of Citizen Journalism*, MDCL Conference, University of Leicester.

- Chung, et al. (2007). *Uses and Perceptions of Blogs: A Report on Professional Journalists and Journalism Educators*. School of Journalism and Telecommunications, University of Kentucky
- Dammon Loyalka, Michelle (2005) "Blog Alert: Battalion of Citizen Investigative Reporters Cannot be Ignored by Mainstream Media," *The IRE Journal*, p. 19; Alexandra Starr, "Open-Source Reporting," *The New York Times Magazine*, and Suzanne Perry, "Seeking Online Exposure," *The Sunlight Foundation*, January 10, 2008, at <http://www.sunlightfoundation.com/node/4354>; and Perlmutter, op cit. accessed 24/06/2016
- Dimitrakopoulou, D. (2010). *Journalists on the Blog: The Online Discourse of News Professionals*. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.
- Drezner Daniel W. and Henry Farrell, (2004) "The Power and Politics of Blogs," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, *Epoch Times*. (September 25, 2013). *Kenyan Live-Tweeted the Crisis*. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/296998-robert-alai-kenyan-blogger-earns-praise-for-his-coverage-of-kenya-terror-attack-at-westgate-mall>
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. MIT.
- Howard Kurtz, (2007) "Web Site Rushes to Crack the Story and Ends Up with Egg on its Face," *Washington Post*, March 23, 2007, p. C
- Johnson, T. and Kaye, B. (2004). *Wag the blog: How Reliance on Traditional Media and the Internet Influence Credibility Perceptions of Weblogs among Blog users*. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.
- Kang, M. (2009). *Measuring Social Media Credibility: A Study on a Measure of Blog Credibility*. Syracuse University.
- Knight (1999) *An Evaluation Of Knight International Journalism*, University of Texas, US.
- Kramer Staci (2004) *Journos and Bloggers: Can Both Survive?* *Online Journalism Review* at www.ojr.org/041112kramer.
- Krueger and Casey (2000) *Focus Group Review and Practices*, Ball State University USA.
- Kvale Steiner (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage
- Lasica J.D., (2001) "Blogging as a Form of Journalism," *USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review*, at <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/lasica/1019166956.php> accessed 24/06/2016
- Lemann Nicholas, (2005) "Right Hook; The Wayward Press," *The New Yorker*, p. 34.
- Lori R. (2001) *Ethics in Journalism* at <https://books.google.com/books>
- Lowrey, W. and Mackay, B. (2008). *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 2, NO.1. Taylor & Francis, US
- Marshall C. and Ross man B. (2006) *Designing Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- McCombs, M. (1999). *News frontiers in Agenda Setting: Agendas of Attributes and Frames*. University of Texas
- McNamara (1990) *Justification for Qualitative Research in Organisations*, New York University, New York
- McQuail, D. (1994). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. Third Edition. Sage Publishers, London.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. Sixth Edition. Sage Publishers, London.
- Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2003). *Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- Natasha Mack (2008) *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collectors' Field Guide*, Family Health International USA.
- Rem Rieder (2005) "Hold That Obit," *American Journalism Review*, p. 6.
- Richard D.(2008) *A Symbiotic Relationship Between Journalists and Bloggers*, Fellow, Shorenstein Center, Brigham Young University.
- Saffo P., "Farewell Information, it's a Media Age", saffo.com, December 2005
- Smolkin R.,(2004) "The Expanding Blogosphere," *American Journalism Review*, at <http://www.ajr.org/archive.asp?issue=66>. Accessed 24/06/2016
- State of Blogging & Social Media in Kenya 2015 Report*, Published by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE). June 2015
- The Project for Excellence in Journalism*. (2005). *The State of the News Media*. US
- Wall Melissa, (2005) "'Blogs of War': Weblogs as News," *Journalism*, 6: p157-158.
- Williams, K. (2003). *Understanding Media Theory*. Hodder Headline Group. Britain.
- Zuniga et al (2011) *Social Media as a Public Space for Politics: Cross-National Comparison of News Consumption and Participation Behaviours in the*

United States and in the United Kingdom,
University of Texas Austin USA.